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officially announced in the course of the day, had been appointed his Majesty's Poetess Laureate, under the style and title of Heurietta Countess of Laurel.

There could hardly be devised a more apt vehicle for lively political satire than this gay travestie of monarchical power and its showy appurtenances so temptingly supplied. The very day indeed after this commemoration there appeared in the usual record of Dalkey state intelligence, an amusing proclamation from the king, offering a large reward in *cronebanes* (Irish halfpence) to the finder or finders of his Majesty's crown, which, owing to his 'having measured both sides of the road' in his pedestrian progress from Dalkey on the preceding night, had unluckily fallen from the royal brow."

IRISH SUPERSTITIONS—GHOSTS AND FAIRIES.

BY WILLIAM CARLETON.

(First Article.)

WE have met and conversed with every possible representative of the various classes that compose general society, from the sweep to the peer, and we feel ourselves bound to say that in no instance have we ever met any individual, no matter what his class or rank in life, who was really indifferent to the subject of dreams, fairies, and apparitions. They are topics that interest the imagination in all; and the hoary head of age is inclined with as much interest to a ghost-story, as the young and eager ear of youth, wrought up by all the nimble and apprehensive powers of early fancy. It is true the belief in ghosts is fast disappearing; and that of fairies is already almost gone; but with what new wonders they shall be replaced, it is difficult to say. The physical and natural we suppose will give us enough of the marvellous, without having recourse to the spiritual and supernatural. Steam and gas, if Science advance for another half century at the same rate as she has done in the last, will give sufficient exercise to all our faculties for wondering. We know a man who travelled eighty miles to see whether or not it was a fact that light could be conveyed for miles in a pipe under ground; and this man to our own knowledge possessed the organ of marvellousness to a surprising degree. It is singular, too, that his fear of ghosts was in proportion to this capacious propensity to wonder, as was his disposition when snug in a chimney corner to talk incessantly of such topics as were calculated to excite it.

In our opinion, ghosts and fairies will be seen wherever they are much talked of, and a belief in their existence cultivated and nourished. So long as the powers of the imagination are kept warm and active by exercise, they will create for themselves such images as they are in the habit of conceiving or dwelling upon; and these, when the individual happens to be in the appropriate position, will even by the mere force of association engender the particular Eidolon which is predominant in the mind. As an illustration of this I shall mention two cases of apparition which occurred in my native parish, one of which was that of a ghost, and the other of the fairies. To those who have read my "Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry," the first which I shall narrate may possess some interest, as being that upon which I founded the tale of the "Midnight Mass." The circumstances are simply these:—

There lived a man named M'Kenna at the hip of one of the mountainous hills which divide the county of Tyrone from that of Monaghan. This M'Kenna had two sons, one of whom was in the habit of tracing hares of a Sunday, whenever there happened to be a fall of snow. His father it seems had frequently remonstrated with him upon what he considered to be a violation of the Lord's day, as well as for his general neglect of mass. The young man, however, though otherwise harmless and inoffensive, was in this matter quite insensible to paternal reproof, and continued to trace whenever the avocations of labour would allow him. It so happened that upon a Christmas morning, I think in the year 1814, there was a deep fall of snow, and young M'Kenna, instead of going to mass, got down his cock-stick—which is a staff much heavier at one end than at the other—and prepared to set out on his favourite amusement. His father seeing this, reproved him seriously, and insisted that he should attend prayers. His enthusiasm for the sport, however, was stronger than his love of religion, and he refused to be guided by his father's advice. The old man during the altercation got warm; and on finding that the son obstinately scorned his authority, he knelt down and prayed that if the boy persisted in following his own will, he might never

return from the mountains unless as a corpse. The imprecation, which was certainly as harsh as it was impious and senseless, might have startled many a mind from a purpose which was, to say the least of it, at variance with religion and the respect due to a father. It had no effect, however, upon the son, who is said to have replied, that whether he ever returned or not, he was determined on going; and go accordingly he did. He was not, however, alone, for it appears that three or four of the neighbouring young men accompanied him. Whether their sport was good or otherwise, is not to the purpose, neither am I able to say; but the story goes that towards the latter part of the day they started a larger and darker hare than any they had ever seen, and that she kept dodging on before them bit by bit, leading them to suppose that every succeeding cast of the cock-stick would bring her down. It was observed afterwards that she also led them into the recesses of the mountains, and that although they tried to turn her course homewards, they could not succeed in doing so. As evening advanced, the companions of M'Kenna began to feel the folly of pursuing her farther, and to perceive the danger of losing their way in the mountains should night or a snow-storm come upon them. They therefore proposed to give over the chase and return home; but M'Kenna would not hear of it. "If you wish to go home, you may," said he; "as for me, I'll never leave the hills till I have her with me." They begged and entreated him to desist and return, but all to no purpose: he appeared to be what the Scotch call *fey*—that is, to act as if he were moved by some impulse that leads to death, and from the influence of which a man cannot withdraw himself. At length, on finding him invincibly obstinate, they left him pursuing the hare directly into the heart of the mountains, and returned to their respective homes.

In the mean time, one of the most terrible snow-storms ever remembered in that part of the country came on, and the consequence was, that the self-willed young man, who had equally trampled on the sanctions of religion and parental authority, was given over for lost. As soon as the tempest became still, the neighbours assembled in a body and proceeded to look for him. The snow, however, had fallen so heavily that not a single mark of a footstep could be seen. Nothing but one wide waste of white undulating hills met the eye wherever it turned, and of M'Kenna no trace whatever was visible or could be found. His father now remembering the unnatural character of his imprecation, was nearly distracted; for although the body had not yet been found, still by every one who witnessed the sudden rage of the storm and who knew the mountains, escape or survival was felt to be impossible. Every day for about a week large parties were out among the hill-ranges seeking him, but to no purpose. At length there came a thaw, and his body was found on a snow-wreath, lying in a supine posture within a circle which he had drawn around him with his cock-stick. His prayer-book lay opened upon his mouth, and his hat was pulled down so as to cover it and his face. It is unnecessary to say that the rumour of his death, and of the circumstances under which he left home, created a most extraordinary sensation in the country—a sensation that was the greater in proportion to the uncertainty occasioned by his not having been found either alive or dead. Some affirmed that he had crossed the mountains, and was seen in Monaghan; others, that he had been seen in Clones, in Emyvale, in Fivemiletown; but despite of all these agreeable reports, the melancholy truth was at length made clear by the appearance of the body as just stated.

Now, it so happened that the house nearest the spot where he lay was inhabited by a man named Daly, I think—but of the name I am not certain—who was a herd or care-taker to Dr Porter, then Bishop of Clogher. The situation of this house was the most lonely and desolate-looking that could be imagined. It was at least two miles distant from any human habitation, being surrounded by one wide and dreary waste of dark moor. By this house lay the route of those who had found the corpse, and I believe the door was borrowed for the purpose of conveying it home. Be this as it may, the family witnessed the melancholy procession as it passed slowly through the mountains, and when the place and circumstances are all considered, we may admit that to ignorant and superstitious people, whose minds even under ordinary occasions were strongly affected by such matters, it was a sight calculated to leave behind it a deep, if not a terrible impression. Time soon proved that it did so.

An incident is said to have occurred at the funeral which I have alluded to in the "Midnight Mass," and which is cer-

tainly in due keeping with the wild spirit of the whole melancholy event. When the procession had advanced to a place called Mullaghtinny, a large dark-coloured hare, which was instantly recognised, by those who had been out with him on the hills, as the identical one that led him to his fate, is said to have crossed the road about twenty yards or so before the coffin. The story goes, that a man struck it on the side with a stone, and that the blow, which would have killed any ordinary hare, not only did it no injury, but occasioned a sound to proceed from the body resembling the hollow one emitted by an empty barrel when struck.

In the meantime the interment took place, and the sensation began like every other to die away in the natural progress of time, when, behold, a report ran about like wildfire that, to use the language of the people, "Frank M'Kenna was appearing!" Seldom indeed was the rumour of an apparition composed of materials so strongly calculated to win popular assent or to baffle rational investigation. As every man is not a Hibbert or a Nicolai, so will many, until such circumstances are made properly intelligible, continue to yield credence to testimony which would convince the judgment on any other subject. The case in question furnished as fine a specimen of a true ghost-story, freed from any suspicion of imposture or design, as could be submitted to a philosopher; and yet, notwithstanding the array of apparent facts connected with it, nothing in the world is simpler or of easier solution.

One night, about a fortnight after his funeral, the daughter of Daly, the herd, a girl about fourteen, while lying in bed saw what appeared to be the likeness of M'Kenna, who had been lost. She screamed out, and covering her head with the bed-clothes, told her father and mother that Frank M'Kenna was in the house. This alarming intelligence naturally produced great terror; still, Daly, who notwithstanding his belief in such matters possessed a good deal of moral courage, was cool enough to rise and examine the house, which consisted of only one apartment. This gave the daughter some courage, who, on finding that her father could not see him, ventured to look out, and she then could see nothing of him herself. She very soon fell asleep, and her father attributed what she saw to fear, or some accidental combination of shadows proceeding from the furniture, for it was a clear moonlight night. The light of the following day dispelled a great deal of their apprehensions, and comparatively little was thought of it until evening again advanced, when the fears of the daughter began to return. They appeared to be prophetic, for she said when night came that she knew he would appear again; and accordingly at the same hour he did so. This was repeated for several successive nights, until the girl, from the very hardihood of terror, began to become so far familiarised to the spectre as to venture to address it.

"In the name of God," she asked, "what is troubling you, or why do you appear to me instead of to some of your own family or relations?"

The ghost's answer alone might settle the question involved in the authenticity of its appearance, being, as it was, an account of one of the most ludicrous missions that ever a spirit was dispatched upon.

"I'm not allowed," said he, "to spake to any of my friends, for I parted wid them in anger; but I'm come to tell you that they are quarrellin' about my breeches—a new pair that I got made for Christmas day; an' as I was comin' up to thrace in the mountains, I thought the ould ones 'ud do better, an' of coorse I didn't put the new pair an me. My raison for appearin'," he added, "is, that you may tell my friends that none of them is to wear them—they must be given in charity."

This serious and solemn intimation from the ghost was duly communicated to the family, and it was found that the circumstances were exactly as it had represented them. This of course was considered as sufficient proof of the truth of its mission. Their conversations now became not only frequent, but quite friendly and familiar. The girl became a favourite with the spectre, and the spectre on the other hand soon lost all his terrors in her eyes. He told her that whilst his friends were bearing home his body, the handspikes or poles on which they carried him had cut his back, and occasioned him great pain! The cutting of the back also was found to be true, and strengthened of course the truth and authenticity of their dialogues. The whole neighbourhood was now in a commotion with this story of the apparition, and persons incited by curiosity began to visit the girl in order to satisfy themselves of the truth of what they had heard. Every

thing, however, was corroborated, and the child herself, without any symptoms of anxiety or terror, artlessly related her conversations with the spirit. Hitherto their interviews had been all nocturnal, but now that the ghost found his footing made good, he put a hardy face on, and ventured to appear by daylight. The girl also fell into states of syncope, and while the fits lasted, long conversations with him upon the subject of God, the blessed Virgin, and Heaven, took place between them. He was certainly an excellent moralist, and gave the best advice. Swearing, drunkenness, theft, and every evil propensity of our nature, were declaimed against with a degree of spectral eloquence quite surprising. Common fame had now a topic dear to her heart, and never was a ghost made more of by his best friends, than she made of him. The whole country was in a tumult, and I well remember the crowds which flocked to the lonely little cabin in the mountains, now the scene of matters so interesting and important. Not a single day passed in which I should think from ten to twenty, thirty, or fifty persons, were not present at these singular interviews. Nothing else was talked of, thought of, and, as I can well testify, dreamt of. I would myself have gone to Daly's were it not for a confounded misgiving I had that perhaps the ghost might take such a fancy of appearing to me, as he had taken to cultivate an intimacy with the girl; and it so happens, that when I see the face of an individual nailed down in the coffin—chilling and gloomy operation—I experience no particular wish ever to look upon it again.

Many persons might imagine that the herd's daughter was acting the part of an impostor, by first originating and then sustaining such a delusion. If any one, however, was an impostor, it was the ghost, and not the girl, as her ill health and wasted cheek might well testify. The appearance of M'Kenna continued to haunt her for months. The reader is aware that he was lost on Christmas day, or rather on the night of it, and I remember seeing her in the early part of the following summer, during which time she was still the victim of a diseased imagination. Every thing in fact that could be done for her was done. They brought her to a priest named Donnelly, who lived down at Ballynasaggart, for the purpose of getting her cured, as he had the reputation of performing cures of that kind. They brought her also to the doctors, who also did what they could for her; but all to no purpose. Her fits were longer and of more frequent occurrence; her appetite left her; and ere four months had elapsed, she herself looked as like a spectre as the ghost himself could do for the life of him.

Now, this was a pure case of spectral illusion, and precisely similar to that detailed so philosophically by Nicolai, the German bookseller, and to others mentioned by Hibbert. The image of M'Kenna not only appeared to her in daylight at her own house, but subsequently followed her wherever she went; and what proved this to have been the result of diseased organization, produced at first by a heated and excited imagination, was, that, as the story went, she could see him with her eyes shut. Whilst this state of mental and physical feeling lasted, she was the subject of the most intense curiosity. No matter where she went, whether to chapel, to fair, or to market, she was followed by crowds, every one feeling eager to get a glimpse of the girl who had actually seen, and what was more, spoken to a ghost—a live ghost.

Now, here was a young girl of an excitable temperament and large imagination, leading an almost solitary life amidst scenery of a lonely and desolate character, who, happening to be strongly impressed with an image of horror—for surely such was the body of a dead man seen in association with such peculiarly frightful circumstances as filial disobedience and a father's curse were calculated to give it—cannot shake it off, but on the contrary becomes a victim to the disease which it generates. There is not an image which we see in a fever, or a face whether of angel or devil, or an uncouth shape of any kind, that is not occasioned by cerebral excitement, or derangement of the nervous system, analogous to that under which Daly's daughter laboured. I saw her several times, and remember clearly that her pale face, dark eye, and very intellectual forehead, gave indications of such a temperament as under her circumstances would be apt to receive strong and fearful impressions from images calculated to excite terror, especially of the supernatural. It only now remains for me to mention the simple method of her cure, which was effected without either priest or doctor. It depended upon a word or two of advice given to her father by a very sensible man, who was in the habit of thinking on these

matters somewhat above the superstitious absurdities of the people.

"If you wish your daughter to be cured," said he to her father, "leave the house you are now living in. Take her to some part of the country where she can have companions of her own class and state of life to mingle with; bring her away from the place altogether; for you may rest assured that so long as there are objects before her eyes to remind her of what happened, she will not mend on your hands."

The father, although he sat rent free, took this excellent advice, even at a sacrifice of some comfort: for nothing short of the temptation of easy circumstances could have induced any man to reside in so wild and remote a solitude. In the course of a few days he removed from it with his family, and came to reside amidst the cheerful aspect and enlivening intercourse of human life. The consequences were precisely as the man had told him. In the course of a few weeks the little girl began to find that the visits of the spectre were like those of angels, few and far between. She was sent to school, and what with the confidence derived from human society, and the substitution of new objects and images, she soon perfectly recovered, and ere long was thoroughly set free from the fearful creation of her own brain.

Now, there is scarcely one of the people in my native parish who does not believe that the spirit of this man came back to the world, and actually appeared to this little girl. The time, however, is fast coming when these empty bugbears will altogether disappear, and we shall entertain more reverend and becoming notions of God than to suppose such senseless pranks could be played by the soul of a departed being under his permission. We might as well assert that the imaginary beings which surround the couch of the madman or hypochondriac have a real existence, as those that are conjured up by terror, weak nerves, or impure blood.

The spot where the body of McKenna was found is now marked by a little heap of stones, which has been collected since the melancholy event of his death. Every person who passes it throws a stone upon the heap; but why this old custom is practised, or what it means, I do not know, unless it be simply to mark the spot as a visible means of preserving the memory of the occurrence.

Daly's house, the scene of the supposed apparition, is now a shapeless ruin, which could scarcely be seen were it not for the green spot that was once a garden, and which now shines at a distance like an emerald, but with no agreeable or pleasing associations. It is a spot which no solitary schoolboy will ever visit, nor indeed would the unflinching believer in the popular nonsense of ghosts wish to pass it without a companion. It is under any circumstances a gloomy and barren place, but when looked upon in connection with what we have just recited, it is lonely, desolate, and awful.

Ἡ Ἥδια.—(THE HEDGEHOG.)

SOME twenty years ago it was not unusual in the south of Ireland to see boys assembled about a fire of straw, loudly exulting over a flame-surrounded victim, whose attempts to escape, rendered nugatory by a timid retraction as it were into himself, served but to call forth louder shouts of triumph from his persecutors, who thought they justified their savage deed by proclaiming its hapless object as a witch, a robber of orchards, and a sucker of cows. Leaving to our antiquarian friends to discover whether the cruel act in question was not a holocaust originating in the mystic rites of Pagan times, it is for us to vindicate the wronged, and show the absurdity of the charges by which wrong has been maintained, and at the same time to indicate such matter as may serve to direct kindness to that innocent victim of ignorance, the inoffensive Hedgehog. That it is not a witch according to the old law, may be proved in a court of justice spite of the popular opinion and in defiance of the authority of Shakspeare, whose witches in Macbeth are warned that the proper time had come to commence their infernal incantations by "thrice and once the hedge-pig whined." We have no witness that a hedgehog ever rode a broomstick or vomited knives, skewers, coals of fire, or any such like legal proofs of witchcraft; neither, perhaps you exclaim, is the writer of so much nonsense a witch. True it is that the creature so named has its place nowhere in the classification of a zoologist, yet still an undefined idea of its existence floats in the imagination of the most ignorant, and it is not extraordinary that an opinion once universal should still linger in unenlightened minds. In no way do we

consider superstitious prejudices can better be extinguished than by inducing accuracy of observation of natural phenomena, which shows that nothing supernatural exists. The second charge, that the hedgehog is a robber of orchards, is a very old one. Pliny, as translated by Holland, states—"Hedgehogs make their provision beforehand of meat for winter in this wise: they wallow and roll themselves upon apples and such fruit lying under foot, and so catch them up with their prickles, and one more besides they take in their mouth, and so carry them into hollow trees."

Now, this has no foundation in fact. True it is that the hedgehog is very often found in the neighbourhood of orchards; but then this may be accounted for by the fact that the fences of such places are usually of exactly the thick and unfrequented kind the animal best likes to inhabit. Our repeated experience has never enabled us to discover that a hedgehog will eat apples: on the contrary, in early youth, when imbued with the general belief that this fruit was their diet, we have in more than one or two instances (most cruelly as we now believe) starved to death unfortunate specimens, which we shut up in a box with an ample supply of apples, not one of which they ever ate. That a magpie will steal and hide silver spoons, or a raven silk stockings, we know, and may use it as an argument that animals steal what they do not want; but that a hedgehog steals apples in the way stated, experiment will at once prove to be untrue, for, from the varied position of the points of the spines when fixed, it is impossible to fasten an apple upon them; and when they are not fixed, they yield at once to the pressure made in the attempt. Though domesticated hedgehogs can easily be brought to feed on bread and milk or dressed vegetables, yet all our observation goes to prove that in a state of nature, or when permitted to stray in a garden, they never eat any but animal food. This is at variance with the generally received opinion, which is supported by the authority of White, who, in his admirable History of Selborne, complains that hedgehogs injured his garden by boring with their long snouts under the plantain that grew in his grass walks, eating off the root upwards, leaving the tufts of leaves untouched, and defacing his grounds by making unsightly holes. He then immediately goes on to prove that these identical animals used beetles as no inconsiderable portion of their food. Now, it strikes us that his previous observation was not made with his usual accuracy, and that the hedgehogs did not eat the roots of plantain, but dug up where they had been to catch the larvæ of beetles that had just devoured them. Thus rooks have been charged with wantonly plucking up grass, while the truth is, that they only pull up plants attacked at the root by the larvæ of the cockchafer or some other of the *Phytophagous coleoptera* (as vegetable-eating beetles are called), catch in the fact the destructive insect, and so stop its ravages; thus rendering important services to those who, for lack of accurate observation, falsely accuse and mischievously shoot them. Trusting we have satisfied you that the hedgehog does not steal apples, we come to the next charge, that he sucks cows. To refute this we have the best possible evidence in the animal's mouth, the structure of which is completely unsuited to the accomplishment of such an object. That he will drink milk with avidity when domesticated, is certain, but this is only a taste he acquires in common with hundreds of other animals: there is scarcely one that may not be induced to relish such diet. Having thus cleared our hero (a name he fully deserves, as he wins battles by passive resistance) from the charges brought against him, we proceed to give some anecdotes of our personal knowledge, and shall finish with a few interesting facts in his history, for the information of those who take pleasure in accurate acquaintance with nature's works.

We have before mentioned our starving of hedgehogs by endeavouring to make them eat apples. In one of these cases we suffered no small retribution. We were at school in these days, and a practice existed amongst us called "slating." It was an innocent imitation of the murderous attacks made in Dublin by short-sighted combinators on such of their fellow tradesmen as refused obedience to their mischievous laws. With us it consisted in waylaying each other in the dark passages, and striking with the open palms the hats or caps of the surprised over the eyes. Having been thus treated many times, we bethought ourselves of turning our starved hedgehog to account, and proceeded to skin him with the intent of making a cap; so that when again "slated," the attacking party would find reason to call out in the words of Chaucer,

"Like sharpe urchins his hair was growe."